

The History of the NMRA

Sunday, September 1st, 1935 and Onward...

Compiled/Assembled/Written (Beginning April 2024) by John Robert Coy, MMR 730

This history is a compilation of: documents, articles, photographs, images, drawings, etc. of the National Model Railroad Association's (NMRA) history. This is by far the largest NMRA history ever assembled.

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It was compiled and written in a chronological format, which will allow for, as John Allen once wrote on his Gorre & Daphetid model railroad layout drawing, "To be continued."

It was 1935, Amelia Earhart had just become the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California. As the Dust Bowl was beginning, Babe Ruth was ending his incredible career.

America had recovered from a major war and didn't know that soon it would be entering another. And, two train clubs, one in Columbus, Ohio, and the other in Pittsburgh, PA, made the unsettling discovery that their trains wouldn't run on each other's tracks.

While that last event paled in comparison to the others, time would show that it was the seed that would grow and become the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA).

It all began in the early 1930s with Al Kalmbach, W.P. Graham, Harry Bondurant and Forest Flottler meeting at Al's house to discuss the state of model railroading. Soon a teenage Bob Keune would meet these men.

In the early 1930s, times and things were far different than today. The early 1930s were a period of great economic depression. Model railroading was in its infancy. Local model railroading clubs, particularly in larger cities, were the centers of much modeling effort.

Some manufacturers powered their trains with 6-volt DC, some with 12-volt DC, and others with 16-volt AC. There were even a handful that used 115-Volt AC. Some modelers used inside third rail, some used outside third rail, some used two rails. Traction modelers had similar variations in overhead wire placement, size, voltages, and pantograph construction.

Club Members in Columbus, Ohio and Pittsburgh, PA, were traveling by train to visit their counterparts' layouts every month. However, as written above, they discovered that they had major issues because they couldn't reliably operate their own equipment on each others' layouts.

At issue was the equipment itself. No basis existed for interchange. At that time, no standards of construction, coupling, electrical or even track elements had been created on which to base the development of the models. Each layout had its own unique set of specifications.

Thanks to a guy named Henry Ford, people became more mobile. That provided the means for model railroading to break out of its little pockets here and there and grow into mainstream America.

The need for standards was once again strikingly demonstrated at the first convention on Labor Day weekend 1935 in Milwaukee. Some of the visitors had brought equipment to run on the Milwaukee Union Terminal O Gauge Club railroad.

Their third rail shoes were just a bit too short and were continually slipping off the third rail, jamming and causing derailments. The visitors said the third rail was wrong. The Milwaukee Club said the visitors' third rail shoes were wrong. This unsettling disagreement almost derailed the effort to work together for the betterment of the hobby.

In 1934, these clubs set-up a meeting in Memorial Hall in Columbus, Ohio. Members from these two clubs also met with club members from New York, Milwaukee and Detroit to set-up meetings in New York, Chicago and Milwaukee. Their idea was to share their hobby ideas and find common ground.

It was at these meetings the attendees shared their vision of a national organization that would promote standards so equipment in all parts of the hobby could interchange.

It was their collective belief by banding together that they could collectively affect the hobby's development.

It is important to note that standards were not a blueprint for manufacturer development, but rather as a guide to the individual modeler. The reason was simple, most individuals were scratch-building their own equipment.

In addition, the model railroading hobby had significant issues as each manufacturer created their trains however they wanted without regard to “interchanging” with other model trains.

Couplers by different makers were shaped differently and weren't at the same height; meaning it was a major problem for the hobbyist. Many model railroad items had problematic physical differences. That was a primary reason as to why the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) was created.

On July 9, 1934, the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee was incorporated. Their first layout was at the YMCA on 4th Street. Bob Keune joined the club and at that point. Bill Walthers was already a Member. As this club grew, a portable layout was built and taken to the Milwaukee Model & Hobby Show.

The Model Railroad Bureau of Standards (fore-runner to the NMRA) was established with Harry Bondurant as the first Secretary. Al Kalmbach sent out a letter inquiring about those interested in gathering for a convention. Bob Keune participated in that convention that culminated in the **creation of the National Model Railroad Association on Sunday, September 1st, 1935. Bob became a Charter Member.**

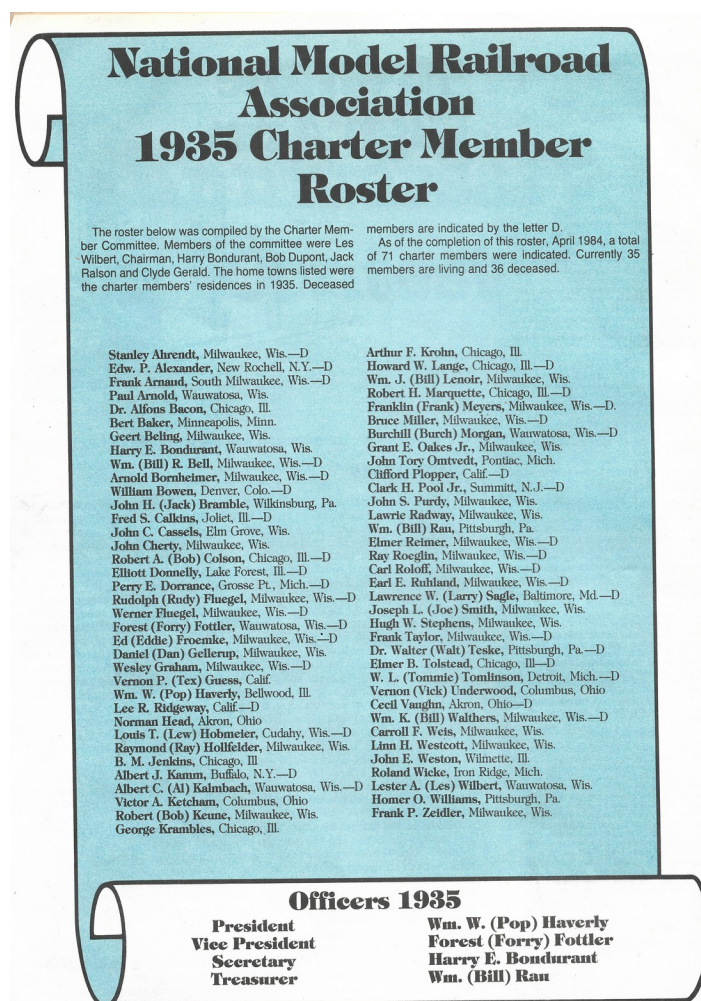


The National Model Railroad Association was founded at this meeting held in Milwaukee on Labor Day weekend, 1935.

The National Model Railroad Association grew more or less spontaneously out of two basic needs of the fledgling hobby.

The first was the need for standards to assure interchangeable equipment. The second was the social need for getting together with other followers of a hobby which was then thought by outsiders to be slightly odd.

The NMRA was actually formed at the beginning of a short business meeting. A resolution was passed that those present band together under the name of the “National Model Railroad Association” (NMRA) to promote the model railroading hobby and to set standards for the hobby. The resolution was written on a large sheet of paper and everybody, 71 in all, signed it.



1935 SEPTEMBER: FIRST MEETING MINUTES

Minutes Of N.M.R.A.'s First Convention

MODEL RAILROAD CLUB OF MILWAUKEE

ROOM 10, MILWAUKEE COMMERCIAL PRESS BUILDING
545 N. BATH STREET
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

First national convention of model railroaders meeting at the Milwaukee Y.M.C.A. on Sunday Sept. 1 1935.

At 2:31 P.M. the meeting was called to order by Mr. Fottler.

The invocation was given by Mr. Bondurant.

A motion was passed that all details of the planning of the national organization be delegated to committees.

The following officers were elected:

President.....Wm. Haverly Sr.
Vice Pres.....M. Forest Fottler
Secretary.....H. E. Bondurant
Treasurer.....Wm. Rau Jr.

After considerable discussion, a motion was passed that the above officers, acting as an executive committee, appoint all other committees to help to develop the national organization, set up standards, etc.

The name, ''NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION'', was chosen as our official name.

A motion was passed that the president and secretary issue certificates of charter membership to all registered.

It was voted to hold the next annual convention in Chicago at the same period of the year. Sept. 5-6-7, 1936.

The meeting adjourned until the evening session.

Sunday evening:

The executive committee reported back that the following people had been appointed to act:

W. F. Graham....To arrange area representatives.
H. E. Bondurant..to head committee on standards.

The executive committee to draft the by-laws.
The report was accepted.

A motion was passed that ''The Model Railroader'' be the official magazine of the Association.

Motions were passed that the secretary be instructed to write letters of thanks to the Milwaukee Y.M.C.A. and The Milwaukee Road for all the courtesies rendered us.

The convention adjourned.

November 1935

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION.

Bulletin #1.

The National Model Railroad Association was formed at a convention of model railroaders held in Milwaukee over the Labor Day week-end, August 31-September 2, 1935. This convention, the first to be held, was attended by over fifty model railroaders. Registration for the convention was held on Saturday, August 31, with the Milwaukee Union Terminal R.R. of the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee, Inc., holding open house on this day. Sunday morning, Sept., 1st. was devoted to a tour of the West Milwaukee Shops of The Milwaukee Road. In the afternoon, the first business session was held.

At this session the following officers were elected: W.W.Haverly, Sr., Bellewood Ill., President; M.Fottler, Wauwatosa, Wis., Vice-President; H.E.Bondurant, Wauwatosa Wis., Secretary; Wm.Rau, Jr., Pittsburg, Pa. Treasurer. Details of the organization etc. were left to the officers of the association, acting as an executive committee. The committee announced the following appointments at the evening session:

Standards Committee- H.E.Bondurant, Chairman; Organization Director-W.P.Graham, whose duties will be to divide the country into territories for organization purposes and to appoint a temporary representative in each division to take care of association interests. Preparation of the By-Laws was left to the Executive Committee. A.C.Kalmbach, Editor of The Model Railroader and E.A. Lalk, Asst. General Freight Agent of the Milwaukee Road gave talks, and reports from several clubs were given by the following: Akron, Ohio, Norman Head; Columbus, Ohio, V.C.Underwood; Pittsburgh, Pa., Wm.Rau, Jr.; Milwaukee, Wis., Earl E. Ruhland.

The reports were followed by a general introduction of all present at the convention. The Model Railroader was selected as the Official magazine of the Association, and will each month have news of the association. Chicago, Ill. was selected the site of the next convention, which will be held over the Labor Day week-end, Sept. 5, 6, 7, 1936. Before adjourning, motions were passed that the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee, Inc., be thanked for their work on the convention, and that thanks be given to the Milwaukee Y.M.C.A. and The Milwaukee Road for their fine cooperation in making the convention a success.

A meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Chicago late in October, at which time dues and qualifications for membership in the association were agreed upon. Membership in the National Model Railroad Association shall be open to any one interested in model railroading, or railroading. The dues were fixed at 50¢ per year. In accordance with the desire of those attending the first convention, certificates of charter membership may be obtained by all those who attended this convention, but must be obtained within the first year. These may be secured from Mr. H.E. Bondurant 2327 N. 70th. St. Wauwatosa, Wis., for a fee of 25¢.

The November issue of the Model Railroader lists the regional representatives of the association who have been appointed, and has a map showing the various divisions.

The National Model Railroad Association was formed with the following purpose:
ESTABLISH STANDARDS - PROMOTE FELLOWSHIP--FACILITATE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND EQUIPMENT - HOLD NATIONAL EXHIBITS--ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR MERCHANDISE.

You may join the association or obtain information as to the association by writing the following: Your regional representative; H.E. Bondurant, Secretary, 2327 N. 70th. St., Wauwatosa, Wis. or W.P. Graham, Organization Director, 2331 S. Kinross Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

SPECIAL CLUB RATES Anyone holding a membership in the N.M.R.A., at the 50¢ rate as mentioned above, may secure any number of additional members at 10¢ each. Regular membership cards will be issued to all, but the bulletins will be sent to the original member. Special rates are also available thru our regional organizations.

Note: This Bulletin was prepared by Henry Bondurant, Secretary of the NMRA in 1935.

Before the first convention in Milwaukee adjourned, motions were passed that the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee and the YMCA of Milwaukee, be thanked for all of their support in helping making this first convention a success. The convention included a tour of the West Milwaukee [Road] shops and the railroad club: Milwaukee Union Terminal had an open house.

It is interesting to look back to the first convention in Milwaukee and notice that even then the idea was proposed of sub-dividing the NMRA into Regions. In fact, the first attempt at organizing a region was a meeting at Springfield, Mass., in November 1935, but that effort failed.

1936 February The Central Region, organized at Columbus, Ohio, in February 1936, may possibly have been the first Region. This area included some of the real model railroad boomers from places like Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Columbus who had come the longest distances to the original 1935 convention.

The 1936 convention, attendance 200, which was held at Chicago Union Station, was called the: “Modeler's Builder's Guild” convention. This convention which featured a clown at the banquet, and was run very well according to Bob Kuene.

Bob remembered the tingle of satisfaction which ran through the group at the Chicago convention when a message of recognition and appreciation was read from the Association of American Railroads.

The most important business settled at this 1936 meeting were the adoption of standards for O, OO and HO gauges. However, these standards were tentative until more experience in these gauges was acquired. OO standards were deferred since there were only two OO scalers at the convention.

In addition, By-Laws and a short concise Constitution were adopted. Several manufacturers attended these meetings and were very cooperative, stating that while this may cause additional expense, they surely would live up to the newly proposed standards.



1936 Officers: Tomlinson, Rau, Fottler and Dorance. Tomlinson was Secretary, William Rau was Treasurer, Forest Fottler was our second President, and Dorance was Vice-President.



Earliest known N.M.R.A. membership photo. At 1936 Chicago convention, members and Burlington's Pioneer Zephyr,

1937

Model railroading really started to come into its own at the Detroit convention in 1937 when a writer appeared from Time Magazine and a sympathetically written story of our hobby appeared for the first time in a national publication.

The 1937 convention recognized the NMRA had many Canadian Members. Therefore, a discussion was held involving a name change to the: American Model Railroad Association.

However, that name was already taken.

Therefore, it was agreed that the name would remain the same with the understanding that Canada was in the field of the organization.

The 1937 convention was also one for the ages as it introduced to the National Model Railroad Association its logo and membership pin which continues on to this very day!





The Emblem

Reprinted from the Silver Anniversary Journal by A. C. Kalmbach

One of the most lasting accomplishments at the Detroit Convention in 1937 was the adoption of the NMRA membership pin and emblem which have remained unchanged to this day. The design was worked out by a committee including myself, Ken Cromwell of Baltimore and Tom Tomlinson of Detroit. We met informally in some low dive on lower Woodward Avenue in Detroit. It is reported that we got into the place because we heard it had a brass rail and thought it was a model railroad.

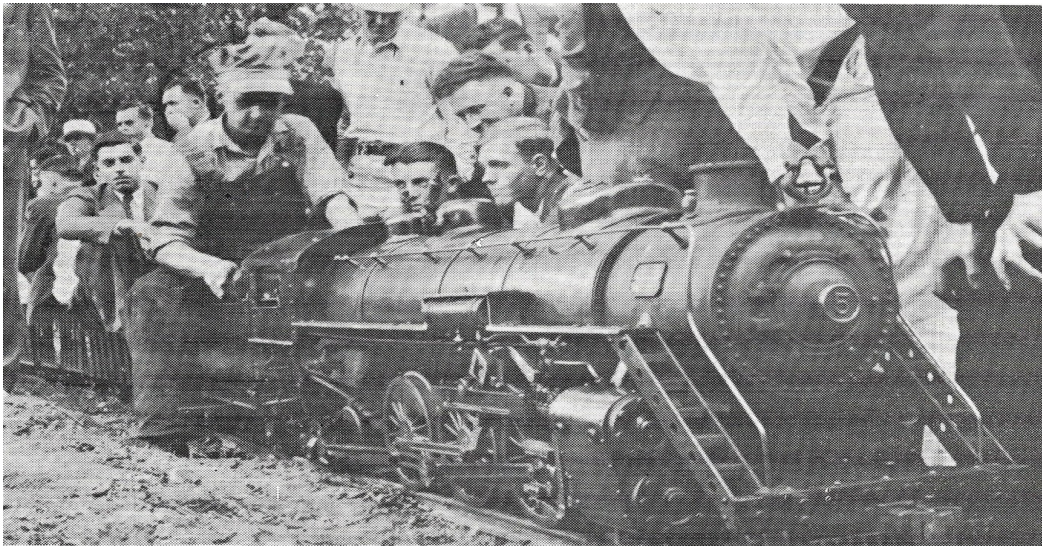
Anyway, it was the age of steam and what, we thought, was more symbolic of railroading than a locomotive driving wheel. It was sketched on a paper napkin. What was more symbolic of fellowship than a clasped hand or, in railroading, the hand-like coupler. The coupler too was sketched onto the paper napkin and combined into a pleasing design with the driving wheel until we had an emblem—a lapel pin that provided a way of recognizing our fellow model rails wherever we might meet.

1937 Officers pictured below



Kamm, Rau, Tomlinson, Kreuz

Kamm was Vice-President, William Rau was President, Tomlinson was the Treasurer and Kreuz was Secretary.



H. E. BONDURANT
1937 Detroit convention fan trips included rides on 1½" scale live steam railroad of Horace Shaw, Bloomfield Hills.

1937 Detroit Convention at Horace Shaw's live steam railroad.

Below is a photo from the 1938 Convention



A highlight of the 1938 NMRA convention at Buffalo was a chance to inspect a brand-new streamlined Hudson on the group tour of New York Central's West Shore roundhouse.

Photo courtesy of the NMRA Kalmbach Memorial Library collection.

It began with a group of friends in Milwaukee — including Bill Walthers, Al Kalmbach, Linn Westcott, Frank Zeidler, William Bowen and Harry Bondurant to name just a few — whose passion for model trains brought them together to share equipment and ideas. Their early efforts laid the cornerstone for the National Model Railroad Association and the universal standards that made each generation of models better. Today, we salute NMRA members past, present and future, as we continue working together to build excellence, grow the hobby and make model railroading fun for everyone.

1938: The happenings of 1938

This time it is Sept. 17, 1938, and this BULLETIN was copied on two 8½" x 14" pages, just two months after the last BULLETIN was issued. The editor figured that the issues will now follow at a more frequent rate because the association was entering into a very active season with lots to say, and with this in mind, there would be more to print.

It was said that those who missed the 1938 convention missed the most active one we had to that date. They say it was truly a very good convention and the Model Railroad Engineers of Buffalo, New York, did a real good job of putting on an excellent show, with two large layouts, large commercial displays, and business meeting facilities. There were nearly 300 delegates registered, representing most of the clubs and districts in the East and Mid-East. They said it was most gratifying to see people present from some of the oldest and best known clubs in the States. The social and sightseeing portions of the convention were well arranged and everything went very smoothly. New York City was selected as the convention city for 1939 (more on this in later BULLETINS).

The most important action taken at this convention was to develop and adopt a new plan of organization that resulted from a feeling that the association had gone about as far as it could on its Standards work and really had nothing to offer its members in the way of services. There were certain happenings in the past year that seemed to support this belief and indicated that the association was at a standstill. Fortunately, the feeling was not general, and a few members took it upon themselves to work out a proper program that would give the association its proper place in the hobby of model railroading. A large part of the creative work was done by Bill Ackerman, who consolidated many ideas and presented them to the members present, a plan that was hashed over and adopted.

Briefly, the plan revolved around a business manager who was responsible to an executive committee composed of four officers—the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The business manager would be appointed by the officers and serve under their direction until replaced by them. He would handle all membership work, dues, BULLETINS, and association activities, thus consolidating all this work in one area that the several officers had tried in the

past. State or district representatives would be appointed to assist him and form a closer contact with the members and clubs throughout the country.

An engineering department was set up to include Standards and products approval which had been adopted and to carry on research and development with the manufacturers. All this was under the direction of Harry Bondurant of 2327 N. 70th St., Wauwatosa, Wis.

The association fiscal year was to run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 3, and officers nominated at the Labor Day Convention would be voted on by all members by mail and take office the following Jan. 1. At the Buffalo Convention, the following men were nominated for the following year, 1939, and a stamped addressed ballot was enclosed for the members' use: For president, A.J. Kamm of the Model Railroad Engineers of Buffalo; vice president, R. Constantine of the New York Society of Model Engineers; secretary, W.F. Ackerman of the New York Model Railroad Club; and for treasurer, Kenneth Cromwell of the Model Railroad Club of Baltimore. These men were voted for by checking the ballot that was sent to the members. There were provisions also, for inserting any other members' name on the ballot, also. Today we call it write-in. However, this provision did not apply to the office of vice president, as it was important that Richard Constantine was elected, as he was to handle the 1939 Convention preparations. Ballots were to be returned by Nov. 1, 1938, and the present officers were to continue in office until Jan. 4, 1939.

In order to carry on the enlarged program of the association, they voted to make the membership rate 50 cents for each member. The old club rate was discontinued. In the past, the greater part of our membership, which was 700 in 1938, was all right, but with the new setup, the treasury has been accordingly too small to support any real constructive work. The increased rate, it was felt, would result in sufficient fi-

nances to allow the business manager and the engineering department to offer worthwhile benefits to the membership. For his services, the business manager was paid \$50 for the year 1939, and this sum increased in subsequent years. Actually, 50 cents per year was a small amount to pay toward the work the association would do for each model railroader. In establishing Standards that were universally adopted, it had already done a job that deserved the support of everyone.

A new constitution was being prepared and a copy was sent to each member. The membership list promised for distribution at the convention could not be issued because of constant receipt of the new applications right up to Labor Day.

The Standards Committee issued a list of manufacturers and dealers whose products conformed to the NMRA Standards. The approved emblem is now being used by many advertising spots. More products were being checked and the next BULLETIN will include additions to the list. New Standards sheets were being prepared to include changes and additions adopted at the convention, as a result of committee studies.

Membership cards were being printed and the association was now open for payment of dues at 50 cents per member. The cards were good until Dec. 31, 1939, so a member would receive 15 months' membership at the 12 months' rate. Members were urged to send their name, address, scale, gauge, and name of the club, if any, along with 50 cents to the treasurer, Mr. W.L. Tomlinson. In addition to the individuals joining, any club could secure a membership in its name at the individual rate. Such a card would cover the club name only, and would not cover the members of the club.

This issue was signed by W.L. Tomlinson, Treasurer, 15474 Ashton Road, Detroit, Mich.

This is what was happening in a part of 1938. ☉

Buffalo was picked for the 1938 convention on the invitation of the Buffalo Model Railroad Engineers. More than 200 model railroaders were registered. They came from as far away as Quincy, Mass. And Tulsa, OK.

Until 1938, all business of the NMRA had been transacted at the annual conventions, but hundreds of model railroaders from far parts of the country could not attend these meetings.



An important change was made in the Constitution and By-Laws by voting to hold all future elections and votes on standards to be conducted by direct mail ballot in order to allow the expression of opinion by all members.

The NMRA also decided to employ a paid business manager, whose job would be to see that the members got something concrete in return for their dues. The first direct mail was a ballot to go to the membership for the 1939 NMRA election.

1938



DR. WALTER TESKEY

First known picture of an N.M.R.A. convention banquet. The officers are at head table in Buffalo, 1938.

1938



DR. WALTER TESKEY

First Dreamliner? "Iron" horseplay. Buffalo, 1938. Pop Beck 2nd from left.

NMRA's FIRST PRESIDENT WILLIAM "POP" BECK, 2nd from left

1939 This convention was the **FIRST MENTION** of “**model railroad operations**” and the very first informal one was held in an all-night informal session in a hotel room.

Unfortunately, in 1939, it was at that convention word of WWII entered into conversations. Six months before the 1940 convention, the NMRA found itself with no business manager. No memberships had been processed. No Bulletins had been sent out, and there was much unopened mail.

A.C. (Al) Kalmbach, founder and publisher of *Model Railroad Magazine*, stepped in to take over the position. It was under this publishing company's direction that everything came to a head about the coupler issue.

MAY of 1940: First Two Women Members!

Mrs. Alice H. Williams, Secretary of the Annapolis Society of Model Engineers is the FIRST lady to join! “it is rumored that Member M. G. Trenchard of Hasbrouch Heights, N.J., is Mabel Ackerman, masquerading under her maiden name!”

It is 1940 and another set of Officers had been elected to head the NMRA for the coming year. The elected President was Kirke Comestock of Albion, Michigan, who was a Member of the Detroit Model Railroad Club. The Vice President was Stanley Arendt, a Member of the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee.

The Secretary elected was John F. Leonard, who was a Member of the Massachusetts Model Railroad Society, Boston, and the Treasurer elect was Lloyd C. Mayers, who was a Member of the Metropolitan Society of Engineers in Washington D.C.

All of the amendments to the Constitution were approved by unanimous vote. The amendments were all just slight changes making for better context, grammer and spelling.

The 1940 convention was held in Milwaukee, the birthplace of the NMRA. It was the sixth convention for the NMRA. There were over 1000 participants for the first time.

The convention took place at the Schroeder Hotel which was the largest and best equipped hotel in town. A highlight of this convention was a moonlight cruise on Milwaukee Bay which has been called only second to the Bay of Naples in Italy.

For the FIRST TIME in the History of the NMRA, an attempt was made to take care of the wives / girlfriends of convention participants. The Women's Auxiliary of the Model Railroad Club of Milwaukee did itself proud by arranging women's activities.

The convention was referred to as “The Battle Royal.” There was a huge heated disagreement concerning HO couplers. There was a very wide range of opinion on this topic.

Four types of couplers were identified at the 1940 convention: Dummy Couplers, Automatic Couplers, Scale Auto-Couplers and Free Lance Auto-Couplers.

Meredith E. Smith, Chairman of the Engineering Committee gave a complete report on what his committee had been working on. The Committee printed a list of manufacturers who had their products conform to NMRA Standards.

History did not record the eventual outcome of that day as it related to the coupler issue.

However, the Standards Committee was a difficult committee to be a member on that day. Harry Boundurant was the Chairman at that point in time. (Note: the coupler wars lasted three decades).

In addition, because of a mix-up, Peoria, Illinois, was awarded the 1941 convention instead of the expected Washington D.C.

Therefore, the By-Laws were amended to establish the rotation of the national convention between geographical areas—a practice still followed to this very day.

Due to the vacancy of the business manager position, much had fallen behind. There was a scramble of sorts trying to fill the vacancy.

Then, of course, once someone was hired, who would train them or how would they know what to do or where to begin. Al Kalmbach to the rescue!



Al Kalmbach was a major part for the National Model Railroad Association's beginning and Survival. He is also of course the creator of *Model Railroader Magazine*.

The Business Manager's Report follows:

BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT.

On Feb. 1, 1940, I took over the business manager's position in the National Model Railroad Association. There was some unanswered correspondence in the files when I received them which was promptly taken care of. All correspondence from members and officers since that time has been promptly answered. Considerable help has been given, both in personal model railroad problems and in the organization of clubs.

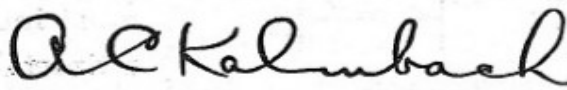
Membership work has been followed up aggressively and to date I have collected dues for 285 current memberships. Two Bulletins have been issued, including this one, and work is well under way on the 1940 Year Book.

Efforts have been made to improve the relationship between the National Model Railroad Association and the model railroad trade, it being felt that both the trade and the association had the same end in view, that is, improvement of the model railroad hobby to the benefit of all concerned. The only difference is that our association members want a more satisfactory hobby and the trade wants more business. I feel that by working together both ends may be achieved.

Our association activity is gradually resulting in increased display of the N. M. R. A. emblem by manufacturers who conform to the association standards.

A detailed journal is being kept in my office of all moneys received for dues and also of all expenditures. A monthly report is submitted to the executive committee, and a full accounting will be made at the convention.

It is my desire to serve the association and its members in any way possible. Suggestions are always in order, and it pleases me to hear from any of you at any time. I hope to meet at least a large portion of the members personally at the 1940 convention.



Business Manager, N. M. R. A.

On March 7 through 9, 1941, in Washington D.C., the Eastern Region of the NMRA was convened under the auspices of the Metropolitan Society of Model Engineers, 365, Union Station.

This was the first of a number of regional meetings which various local societies will sponsor in an effort to bring the NMRA closer to its membership.

These regional meetings are more accessible and easier to attend than a national convention which may possibly be much further away. This was a means to make the NMRA more accessible to its Members.

1941 April. Membership Drive!

In April 1941, the NMRA had a membership drive going full blast. At that time, they were saying that every new member meant another half-dollar (dues were only fifty cents a year) added to the Association income and another half-dollar available for membership benefits, such as more BULLETINS, bigger year books, more personal services, etc. It seems this is a never-ending situation because here we are, some 48 years later, and we are still putting on membership drives.

The Eastern Region put on a regional meeting, their first, during a raging blizzard over the Eastern seaboard that blanketed Washington D.C. This was the heaviest snowfall since the inauguration of President Taft in 1909. Over 100 NMRA members assembled at the Wardman Park Hotel. The focal point of the meeting was the Hobby Show jointly sponsored by the Washington Club and the Association of Model Railroad Manufacturers. A fan trip to the Brunswick, Md., yards of B&O, 40 miles west of Washington, provided the highlight on Saturday morning. There was a small crowd, but B&O handled the excursion very well. Saturday night they held a Dinner Dance in the Continental Room of the hotel, and Larry W. Sagle was the

Toast Master.

Sunday morning they had the informal business meeting with Vic Ketchum, NMRA president at the time, presiding. A resolution was introduced which stated that this meeting was a tremendous success in that it had enabled the scale model railroaders of the surrounding states and the District of Columbia to become better acquainted with one another. It was to be the NMRA's future policy to encourage the promotion of this type of meeting, so that the members are able to enjoy good fellowship, exchange ideas, and have a good time.

An informal report by Meredith E. Smith of the Engineering Committee indicated only one request had been filed with them regarding the amplification of the NMRA Clearance diagram. Seems as though several members were having difficulty getting their articulated locomotives through tunnel mouths on minimum radius curves. Smith also stressed the fact that tests on the Kendrick & Davis motors (K&D) have been completed and that torque and speed curves for all four motors manufactured by this firm are available to members. Also, a formula for determining the proper gear ratio for each locomotive

type was made and appeared in a future issue of the BULLETIN. There were also studies being made for the best methods of axle lubrication, height over rail of freight car underframes, standardization of freight car weights (especially HO), and adoption of the standard operating automatic coupler to remote in O scale.

The Peoria plans were underway, according to V.P. Paul Zickgraff, for the Labor Day convention of 1941. The Peoria club had both HO and O scale railroads. Convention headquarters was to be the Jefferson Hotel. There were commercial exhibits and other interesting things.

President Ketchum appointed the following committees for 1941:

Engineering: E. C. Haid, Chairman
HO gauge; Clark Pool Jr., OO gauge; Bill Lenoir, O gauge; M. E. Smith, member ex-officio.

Nominating: E. H. Beck, Chairman.

Editorial Board for Year Book: P. B. Kissel, Chairman.

Editorial Board for BULLETIN: Adrian Buyse, Chairman.

A \$10 cash prize for the best-designed train carrying case was to be awarded to the member who submitted the winning design to Kirk Comstock, Chairman of the Judging Committee.⊗

1941 June. New Highpoint for Membership!

It is June 1941, and the membership of NMRA has hit a new high—1,131. That is the highest it has been since its inception.

This time the yearly convention was to be in Peoria, Ill., and they planned a good one. Everyone who has attended a previous convention was looking forward to this one. It was held on Aug. 30, 31, and Sept. 1, and according to Paul W. Zickgraff, vice president of the Association, will feature an innovation unparalleled in NMRA convention history. There was a manufacturers exhibit, model contest, a showing of railroad photographic prints and a fan trip. Two operating layouts were shown, one in O scale and the other in HO gauge. These were located in the Peoria Union Station, headquarters of the Peoria Society of Model Engineers, the 7th Annual NMRA Convention hosts.

There is an article in the June 1941 issue of the BULLETIN, regarding the electrical application to model railroads. Mr. Charles E. Hunter, an electrician at Boulder Dam, who wrote the article is an expert in this field. He wrote, quote, "When an electrical potential of one volt

is applied to a resistance of one ohm, a current of one ampere will flow and one watt of power will be consumed." This axiom is true in both a.c. and d.c. circuits. He tells members how to apply the several values of electricity and how to select power supplies.

The 1,131 members of NMRA, as mentioned above, is an impressive total, but they are still after more members. Vic Ketchum, who was president in June of 1941, wrote quite an article in the BULLETIN regarding this, and it seems as though it were written yesterday. They are still after new members, and as Jim Hammers reports in his articles in POUNDING THE RAILS, we are slowly building up again.

Recognition of clubs with 100 percent NMRA rosters was brought up. We should do this again, because people like to have their name in print where everyone can see who they are and what they are doing. Where is the esprit de corps that keeps clubs together and going strong? A list of 15 clubs was recognized, and of the 15, several were listed three times before, and a couple were listed twice before. These clubs were all 100 percent NMRA too.

The Engineering Committee personnel listed three popular gauges for the year 1941. The Chairman, Edward C. Haid, represented HO gauge, O gauge by Clark Pool Jr., and Bill Lenoir was the O gauge representative. Any NMRA member who had an engineering problem, a criticism of manufacturers to accept NMRA Standards, or a suggestion for the revision or amplification of existing Standards, was asked to communicate with the representative of their particular gauge.

NMRA pins for the membership were gold-filled, and bore the emblem of the NMRA. The cost was \$1.50 each, postage paid. A member could order one by sending the amount to the Business Manager, who was Mr. A.C. Kalmbach, at 1568 N. Pierce St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Couplers were also discussed at quite some length. The "new" Walthers, the K&W, and the new Mantua couplers all were used and the Engineering Committee gave a good report on them.

There was also a vote on the Constitutional Amendments as regards to Standards committees.⊗



Frank C. Ellison pictured published August 1941. Famed Creator of the Delta Lines. An O Scale Masterpiece.

1941 Fall

by Ernie Mattschei

It's fall of 1941, and the NMRA is rolling right along. The convention is in Peoria, Ill., as noted in our last column.

The keystone speaker for this convention was Bernard E. Young, manager of the railroad section, public relations department of the Association of American Railroads. His topic was, "Railroads and the Defense Program." He stressed the part that model railroads can take in this effort.

Paul Zickgraff, convention committee chairman, had worked real hard to make this convention the best yet. The big feature for two lucky attendees, was a cab ride on the *Rock Island Rocket* from Chicago to Peoria. They used reservation cards, and numbered them as they received them. The 13th and 53rd cards received were the lucky cards, and this is how they picked the two lucky people to ride the cab.

The two model pikes in Union Station were available for operation. In order to create a railroad atmosphere, the art department of the club had decorated the headquarters with full-size prototype heralds of the major railroads of the country.

Three speakers, all experts in their respective fields, gave talks and demonstrations of their handicraft. M.D. Thornburgh gave a demonstration on the construction of locomotives. Frank C. Ellison gave a talk on "scenic reproduction." Frank Taylor's abilities as a model maker, were enjoyed by all with his talk on the subject. Additionally, there were commercial exhibits by model railroad manufacturers, a program of railroad movies, a photographic contest for the best model railroad and proto-

type photographs, a model contest to determine the best locomotive, passenger and freight cars. Also on display, was the O gauge operating layout owned by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

Headquarters for the convention was the Jefferson Hotel, and a fine time was had by all. There were 280 at the banquet, and as the author of the column wrote, "mopping a graying, balding head, and a sagging jowl," were members of the Brotherhood with their lady friends while seated at the banquet of the Association.

Convention vignettes—Rock Island Consolidation with its drag of open-doored baggage cars and an air-conditioned Pullman and coach ... sleek lined TP&W 4-8-4 with the road's modern bay-window caboose, spotted for photographing at the Union Depot ... and old-time CB&Q 4-4-2 leaving Peoria with a complete train, one combo ... ride over the Rock Island and Peoria terminal—first passenger train in over 20 years ... at Pekin, the inspection of the prettiest little modern 4-4-0 (built 1926) and maroon cars of the Chicago & Illinois Midland, dispatched as a special movement from Springfield, 65 miles distant ... heavy-duty road bed of the P&PU ... the lad wearing goggles to protect his eyes while running in 12 mph territory ... operating under CTC on the return to Peoria ... 0-8-0 moving a drag of loaded hoppers to let fans inspect the big P&PU roundhouse ... cooperation of the model rails in observance of restrictions (there was a war on you know), "Pop" Beck getting the "19" orders authorizing the movement from ORC ... wye-ing around Pekin ... amazement of an eastern fan at seeing an NYC 4-8-2 equipped with

Walschaerts valve gear ... the crowded rear vestibule.

The Engineering Committee reports two additional manufacturers were added to the list of those using NMRA Standards. There were: A-C Railway Model Car Kits & Parts, Chicago, Ill., the Colliers Hobby Shop, 608 Grand Avenue, Oakland, Calif.

An Amendment was passed without a dissenting vote among the ballots received by the secretary. It was Section F, Article II, of the By-laws, and becomes effective immediately. This was for the Standards Committee.

With the phenomenal growth of the NMRA (1941 membership topped 1300), specific problems in connection with the administration of the office of business manager had arisen. Several suggestions were presented to the Executive Committee, and the upshot of the whole thing was several constitutional amendments and a dues increase to \$1 per annum, effective Jan. 1, 1942. Also, three new categories of membership were submitted for approval.

The first Pacific Coast Regional meeting was held Nov. 16, 1941, and was sponsored by the Channel Railroad Club of Santa Barbara, Calif. This was held in conjunction with its second annual model railroad show on Sunday, Nov. 16. A welcome was extended by the mayor of Santa Barbara, and as a special delegate and principal speaker, Lawrence W. Sagle, NMRA veteran and B&O public relations representative. "Tex" Guess, president of PCR, welcomed Larry.

Members of NMRA who wanted to attend this first regional meeting on the Pacific Coast, were urged to communicate with John Childers, Secretary, 1307 Salsipuedes Street, Santa Barbara, Calif. ☉

By 1941, membership had reached 1,350. Financial reports showed that the 50-cent dues were no longer sufficient to run the organization, so the dues were raised to \$1.

1941: In November, I (Written by Victor A. Ketcham, NMRA President 1940-41), wrote my final presidential report to the membership. The NMRA was growing and doing things.

The Engineering Committee had been expanded so that members active in each gauge worked on their own standards.

The War Years Were Hard (WWII)

A regional meeting had been held in Washington D.C. In March of 1941 and another on the west coast in November. The first showed the fun and advantages of regional organization and the second the necessity for it. The NMRA had grown to our largest membership of 1,350 Members.

Between the time of my (Ketcham) last report when written and before it reached the members, Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) had been bombed!

The war's impact was not felt immediately, but as time went on it had an increasing effect. I had become NMRA Treasurer in 1941. **There was \$1.24 in our bank account and we owed \$200.00.**

My first job was to get the membership cards out for the new year, but we had no money. At that time, one of my hobbies was printing, so I set-up type and printed the membership cards and as the dues came in, the cost of mailing them was covered. Renewals were not coming in as they should.

The Draft was making itself felt and the NMRA treasury did not grow. My wife and I spent all our Sundays answering letters.

We also mailed out cards, put out the few Bulletins and did the many things that were necessary to keep the NMRA alive when the going got tough. Some of the Bulletins only had one page.

I particularly recall particularly the August 1943 issue. Printed on only one side of a single sheet, it featured a headline "A Call to Arms."

N. M. R. A. BULLETIN

Official Organ of the National Model Railroad Association

Look for this emblem of approval  when buying model railroad supplies

9th Year

AUGUST, 1943

No. 1

A Call To Arms!

We know that the war comes first, and we would be the last one in the world to suggest anything otherwise—

And we know that everyone who isn't in uniform is doing something to help the war effort—

And we know that everybody is up to his neck in his job and has little time to devote to his hobby—

And we know that many of our members are in the armed service, scattered all over the world—

But, is that any excuse to let the National Model Railroad Association pass out of existence?

Of course not!

All right, then, how shall we prevent that very thing from happening?

We can't prevent it by being indifferent;

We can't prevent it by letting the other fellow do all of the worrying;

We can't prevent it if we pick as our officers—swell fellows all—men who are working day and night on important war jobs; men who otherwise would be more than willing to devote their time to the affairs of the association.

This is no time for quibbling. We can't let our buddies in the service come back to find the N. M. R. A. a dead duck! They wouldn't like that—would feel sort of "let down."

We can't give up all of the advantages we have worked so hard to gain. The N. M. R. A. is the A. A. R. of the model railroaders. It has done yeoman service in standardization. The manufacturers respect its opinions and findings—its recommendations. There is much more work of this nature to be done—so let us keep the association alive.

Attend the N. M. R. A. Convention in Cincinnati in September!

N. M. R. A. Convention

Time: The Labor Day Weekend.

Place: Hotel Gibson, Cincinnati, O.

The boys in the Cincinnati Model Club have been working like beavers to get 3 layouts ready—they hope!

The usual railfan trip is out—definitely—and we all know why, so no need to go into explanations about that.

But—the Cincinnati Street Railways have two "rubberneck" cars that make several trips daily—or they may be chartered.

And there is the thrill of the incline that carries street cars 700 feet up the hillside at an angle of about 50 degrees. Wow!

And railroads—Cincinnati has them as well as one of the finest Union Stations in the world. Maybe we can go up on the dome and see the terminal in operation. And from the various hilltops around town you can see much railroading.

And there is the excursion boat ride on the river.

And—well, what the boys in Cincinnati can cook up will depend on how many plan to go. We hope there will be enough for a banquet.

The Gibson Hotel has both court and outside rooms.

Room Rates

Court singles\$3.00 and \$3.50
Outside singles\$4.00

Dormitory Rates

3 or 4 persons to room\$2.00 per person
5 or more persons to room\$1.75 per person

Send your reservation to:

George Jeneson, Sales Manager
Hotel Gibson
Cincinnati, O.

So come on down, fellows, and let's have a real get-together. We know the O. D. T. has asked us to dispense with unnecessary travel—but this is certainly essential, keeping the N. M. R. A. alive.

We'll be seeing you at one of the "operating conferences" in room 406—or something!

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Confirms to



Standards

Editor:

Adrian Bayne

"... To assemble, define and set up model railroad standards... promote closer understanding and cooperation between model railroad manufacturers, consumers and publishers... promote the greater fellowship of model railroading between model railroaders... promote better understanding in general of railroad problems."
—From Art. I, N. M. R. A. Constitution.

OFFICERS:

President	Vice-President	Secretary
Paul W. Zickgraf	Hugh L. Jack	Victor A. Ketchum Jr.
215 Main St.	1204 Genesee Park Blvd.	50 W. Broad St.
Peoria, Ill.	Rochester, N. Y.	Columbus, O.
Treasurer	Send dues to	
Wesley F. Graham	Victor A. Ketchum Jr.	
2711 W. Wells St.	Secretary	
Milwaukee, Wis.		

At that point in time, everyone was in the army or up to his or her neck in war work. It was then asked: “But is that any excuse to let the NMRA pass out of existence?”

It, of course, was answered with a definite “No.” None-the-less, it was a real question and **the NMRA was in real danger.**

In addition to a lot of the members being drafted, the armed forces began making inroads on the NMRA official family. Paul Zickgraff, 1942 President, was inducted and Hugh Jack, Vice President, managed to stay out just long enough to run the 1942 convention at Rochester and then in he went.

The NMRA formalized its Regional Organization at this convention (1942). Frank Anderson of Los Angeles was part of this movement.

By 1943, there was a growing concern of NMRA Members on the West Coast. Feeling separated by half a continent from the bulk of the organization, they started a movement to form a separate West Coast-based association. **That movement resulted in the birth of the Pacific Coast Region.**

By law changes were made at the national convention in Cincinnati that year that empowered the Regions to hold their own conventions and initiate measures that could be discussed at future conventions.

Adrian Buyse, president, and C.L. Bandy, vice president in 1943, both went into the service before the end of their terms. The membership dropped to about 750. That was when the editorial “A Call to Arms” appeared. Those of us, who possibly could, kept things going.

Even though I was doing war work on the night shift and practicing law in the daytime, I kept at the job of handling dues and memberships, answering correspondence, mailing out Bulletins, etc., mostly because there was no one else to do it.

It was during that period that the standard voltage was changed from 6 to 12 volts. The regional set-up, which preserved the unity of the NMRA, was written into the By-Laws. Standards were adopted for 7/8 gauge and it was officially named "S" gauge.

Larry Sagle was elected President and Ed Campbell as Vice President for 1944, and largely through their energy and ability the NMRA began an upswing.

The Pittsburg Convention that year had a record attendance of 250 inspite of the war. By the end of 1944, my (Vic Ketcham) last year as Secretary & Treasurer, the NMRA had survived the war years and would grow again.

In closing, I cannot refrain from quoting the editor of the 1944 Bulletin who said: "I have often visualized the membership of the NMRA so large we could afford to open an office somewhere, with a full-time, well-paid secretary with sufficient clerical help to do all the things the volunteer officers have to do."

1943-1944 HO STANDARDS SET

When I (Written by Lawrence W. Sagle) was elected President in 1943, the affairs of the NMRA were at a very low ebb. Adrian Buyse, who had been elected President the previous year, was too busy with the war to devote any time to the NMRA.

There was a great delay in getting out information for the 1944 convention. Al Kalmbach, who was acting business manager at that time, instructed me (Sagle) to write something up and he would get it printed and distributed. Bill McAllister was NMRA Vice President and the whole burden of the convention fell on him. Bill did a good job.

Things were going well enough until the Pittsburgh convention. The “boys” in Pittsburgh did not like the nominating committee, which had nominated Ed Ravenscroft for President.

Consequently, they setup a dummy slate and circularized the entire membership with the effect that they almost kept Ed Ravenscroft from being elected.

I, Sagle, think of myself as the “Daddy of the Regional movement.” Up until 1943, we had one region, the Pacific Coast Region (NOTE: which is possibly in conflict with the claim of the Central Region may have been established in 1936) which was organized as a result of my trip to California in 1941 as an emissary from the Peoria convention.

The Pacific Coast was threatening to withdraw from the NMRA and set-up an organization of their own. We had a meeting in Santa Barbara, at which time the regional movement started.

The Pacific Coast Region did actually vote to break away from the NMRA and have their own organization.

Members thought so highly of organizing regions during my administration, we began to divide the country up into regions and a great many were organized. Further, it was through my efforts that the British Region was brought into the NMRA.

Up until I was elected President, it seemed to be an unwritten law that the Vice President, who was always chosen from a local club that would host the convention the following year, would automatically be elected President for the ensuing year.

The Pittsburgh people were anxious for Ed Campbell to be elected President and believed that he had been given a dirty deal. Regardless, **Ed Ravenscroft was elected President.**



Ed RAVENSCROFT
Winner of a coveted honor

Ed Ravenscroft

July 1944: In Bulletin...NMRA Wishes Pacific Coast Region (separated from NMRA in 1941) “great success” in their future.

July 1944, The initials: “I R M A” were raised as a possibility. International Model Railroad Association. Nothing came out of but there were Australian, British and Canadian Members. Several Members felt that our name (NMRA) should reflect reality and truly we were then and are now much more than just a “national” organization. The Incorporation was done in the United States, but we have members in multiple nations all over the world.

1944 July

The War was still going strong...

Historian's Corner

by Ernie Mattschei

July 1944 and the war was still going full blast—everything was rationed, and we were really in a bad way in the NMRA. There were no new members to be had and this hurt us.

The Pacific Coast Region had been real busy with the change in the Constitution that provided for the establishment of local organizations.

The Association had some real nice Charters printed, and the first one issued went to the Pacific Coast Region at Santa Barbara at the Regional Convention on July 2, 1944.

Pittsburgh, Pa., was host for the 1944 NMRA Convention, which again was held on the Labor Day weekend, Sept. 2-4, 1944. Although the war effort made traveling quite uncomfortable, the ones who tried all made it.

For a cost of \$2, you could have your pike listed in the NMRA year book. Listing, as they said, would add to the prestige of your club or pike.

IRMA had come up several times in previous issues of the BULLETIN. It stood for International Model Railroaders Assn. and was suggested as a change from NMRA. However, after bracing themselves for all kinds of arguments, both pro and con, not a peep was heard from anyone, anywhere.

At that time, one of the most valuable

documents that a member of the NMRA received was the Annual Year Book. This little book contained the names and addresses of all members of the NMRA, alphabetically and by state. It was of great assistance when traveling, especially when members wanted to contact one another.

The BRANCHLINE was the new Pacific Coast Region bulletin and was a four-page paper which gave all the news of the clubs in the region and a lot more news of interest to the Coast members. Paul G. Lehman of Los Angeles, Calif., was the editor at the time. There was also the Channel Railroad Club at Santa Barbara which had a monthly bulletin (called KLINKERS AND SPARKS).

The OO gauge committee report was busy with subjects, such as Traction Voltage, Trolley Models, Traction Rail Dimensions, and Trucks. All had to do with wire size and voltage. The chairman of the committee was Clark H. Pool of New York, with members T. L. Carwright of Chicago, Charles Housand of New Orleans, Harold Mann of Tacoma, Wash., and Allen Sharp of West Mystic, Conn. There were also Trolley Committees with G. A. Doeright of Youngstown, Ohio, as chairman, an S Gauge Tinplate Committee with Lt. Warren F. Morgan, USN, of New York, and an On Gauge

Committee with Kirke W. Comstock of Albion, Mich., as chairman.

They could not understand, at the time, why the new S gauge was opposed by so many members. The $\frac{3}{16}$ " scale was here to stay, and many S gaugers will go scale, and the opportunities are endless for this conversion. (*S gauge is still with us, and a very good scale it is, too.*—Historian)

In July 1944, the NMRA president was Lawrence W. Slagle of Baltimore, Md. Edward R. Campbell of Pittsburgh, Pa., was vice president. Victor A. Ketchum Jr. was secretary and was from Columbus, Ohio. Frank C. Anderson from Pasadena, Calif., was treasurer. W. F. McAllister from Cincinnati, Ohio, was general chairman. The Pacific Coast Region vice president was Vernon P. Guess of Santa Barbara, Calif., and Samuel B. McVay of Los Angeles, Calif., was secretary/treasurer.

In those days, the vice president acted as the trustees do now. They attended the several meetings of the Executive Board and conducted the regions' business. A few variations do occur now, but essentially, they represent the region they belong to at the NMRA meetings.⊗



1944 July. Continued...

It is still July 1944, and we're still dredging up some very interesting facts about gauges, etc. The origin of gauges smaller than O and "half"-size gauges seems to be a good place to start this column.

As early as 1906, thought was given to gauges smaller than O by such British model authorities as W. J. Bassett-Lowke, W. E. Twining, and Henry Greenly in an effort to create a "table railway." Models were designed for scales as small as $\frac{1}{8}$ ", but motors for these models weren't commercially available at that time.

Models of the Bassett-Lowke line were produced in their own works at Northampton, or were made to their special designs and specifications by the three German firms Gebrüder Bing, and Georges, of Nuremburg, and Gebrüder Maerklin of Goppingen.

Most of the work was done by Bing and Corette and almost exclusively by the former when Corette went out of business during the first World War.

Prior to the first World War, Bing introduced a small line of trains using $1\frac{1}{8}$ "-gauge track, which they termed OO gauge, thereby inaugurating a custom followed in the case of several other gauges of calling any gauge smaller than O OO or "Double O."

After the war, Bassett-Lowke and Greenly developed a new table railway in collaboration with the Bings. It was made by the Bing works in both clock work and electric. The models were introduced in 1921 and 1924. This gauge

was also termed OO. The actual gauge measurement was arrived at by dividing O gauge in half and producing a gauge $\frac{1}{8}$ " more or less, a size which was later refined to exactly 16.5mm. An approximate scale of 4mm was used with the gauge first.

The gauge immediately became popular with scale modelers, and a more accurate scale for the gauge, 3.5mm, was established by Stewart-Rudpath. Mr. Rudpath rejected the term OO, already used to refer to the 4mm scale, and adopted the name HO (half O) for his 16.5mm gauge, 3.5mm scale.

This is the identical gauge and scale which swept into widespread popularity in the U.S. a decade later and where it has been known as HO gauge.

Any dispute regarding the term HO and OO in this country in the early 1930s was due to a misunderstanding of the difference between American and British OO, which use the same scale, but different gauges (18mm and 16.5mm respectively). There was never any question that the gauge which was roughly the measurement of O gauge would be called anything but HO.

The only logical reasoning along similar lines that can be applied to $\frac{7}{8}$ " gauge is that it is and must be H1 (half 1) gauge, for $\frac{7}{8}$ " is exactly one-half of $1\frac{3}{4}$ ", the size of No. 1 gauge. As a matter of fact, $\frac{7}{8}$ " gauge is more exactly one-half of $1\frac{3}{4}$ " than 16.5mm is of $1\frac{1}{4}$ ".

However, $\frac{7}{8}$ " gauge didn't originate in the U.S. and has a history of its own very similar to that of HO gauge.⊗



1944 Continued...

The year was 1944, and the NMRA was in its 10th year. Although the War was taking most of its members, they still had a well-administered organization.

The Pacific Coast Region had quite a write-up in the July 1944 issue of the BULLETIN. It seems they were "real active" and were "really going to town" on the local organizations. This meant the PCR was working for the establishment of divisions within the region.

The NMRA had made some "very snazzy" charters, and the first one issued went to Santa Barbara, where it was presented to the newly organized region at their regional convention on July 2, 1944.

The NMRA convention in 1944 was held in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Sept. 2-4. Mr. E. R. Campbell, VP of the Association, said that "work progresses on the LARGEST HO gauge layout in the country. You will be assured of seeing 600 feet of well laid track completely 'scenified' with trains of all kinds from OLDTIMERS to STREAMLINERS, motive power from 4-2-0 to 2-8-8-4's and just about everything in between. Rolling stock of all descriptions from fully operating wreckers to diners and Pullmans completely equipped."

In this 1944 issue, they mention the year book in several of the articles. We can remember back a few years (?) that the year book was a real nice addition to the NMRA library of any model rail. It gave, in alphabetical order, the names and addresses of all members of the NMRA, plus the members' gauge, call ahead info for visits to the layout and several other things that made it a very attractive listing. They also pushed for what we now call "passes." A few of the members had them, and again, they were asked to list them in the Yearbook.

Also in the July 1944 issue, there was an article called "Irma." This was regarding a name change from NMRA to International Railroad Modelers Association. The writer of the article (who was not named) says that he got no response from the membership, and from the sound of his writing, we guess that he was disappointed, so he filed the whole thing under unfinished business!

The year book has been claimed to be one of the most valuable documents a member could have. As we said before,

it listed the names and addresses of all members of the Association, alphabetically by states, and was of great value to members who were traveling. One thing they did do, to save on expenses, was to request the several hobby magazines broadcast the fact that the yearbook "will soon go to press, and asks clubs to send in information about themselves, such as name, address, gauge, meeting nights, etc." They also urged that all delinquent members send in their dollar so their names would appear in the Yearbook.

At that time (1944), the NMRA had no Membership Committee because of the War, plus the fact that "no one man or small group could cover the nation." (Look at us now!) They would depend on the hobby magazines to campaign for the Association in their columns, and they were "mighty grateful to them" for their cooperation. They also considered every member a "one man committee" to sign up new members.

During the War there were no conventions as we know them. It was very difficult to travel, due to gasoline restrictions and train passenger restrictions due to troop movements. Therefore, they were more or less "get-togethers of congenial fellows held together by the bands of friendship and a fine hobby." In Washington, D.C., Santa Barbara, Columbus, or Chicago—who could forget those real good meetings? After the War, the regions and the NMRA again held conventions, to transact the business of the regions and the Association.

Also, in this issue they wrote, "the Pacific Coast Region has its own bulletin, THE BRANCH LINE. Those guys on the Coast surely don't do things by halves." It was edited by Paul G. Lehman, since deceased. Also, the Channel Railroad Club at Santa Barbara had a monthly bulletin of its own. "Those boys out there astound us no end!"

This will be the first of many articles on the history of the NMRA. We would appreciate any and all comments on this column from you, the membership. If you feel you need to write about this column, please address all comments to the following—and not to the BULLETIN editor who has enough problems—

Ernie Mattschei
3248 Rogers Ave.
Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

1944 Continued...

Back in July 1944, the membership was in a turmoil over the S gauge situation. At the convention in Cincinnati, a certain member arose and offered a motion that $\frac{7}{16}$ " gauge be called "S" — boy, did he start something! The motion was duly seconded and passed, all in good faith, by the members assembled. That, however, was not the end of the matter, "not by a dang sight."

The NMRA was not trying to force anyone to adopt the $\frac{7}{16}$ " scale. Some manufacturers were toying with the idea of bringing out this scale in post-war days. So it was the duty of the NMRA to set up standards for it. Whether you like it or not, someone may, and all the NMRA would be derelict in its duty if it failed to provide these standards.

One thing was certain, in those days they were sure that they would not continue to call it "S" gauge. They figured that in Cincinnati they adopted the S gauge in good faith, but at the next convention in Pittsburgh, they would probably change it to H1 and admit they didn't know better. Louis Hertz, a well-known authority on "tinplate," finally set them straight on the matter.

He was kind enough to write a short article at the request of the editor and gave him (the editor) permission to print the article. The members were interested in his resume of the history of $\frac{7}{16}$ " gauge. Mr. Hertz already called attention to the fact that the term S gauge referred to tinplate Standard gauge. He said there couldn't be two S gauges, so there seemed to be nothing to do but to correct the error at the next convention.

The following is a brief history of H1 ($\frac{7}{16}$ " gauge):

The authority for both gauge measurement and the correctness of the name of H1 gauge for $\frac{7}{16}$ " dates back to the very inception of standardization in model railroad equipment.

Prior to 1900, German manufacturers of tinplate clockwork, live steam, and electric models developed a standard system of gauge numbers and sizes. The following list gives these sizes correctly for each gauge: No. 0 gauge, $\frac{1}{4}$ "; No. 1 gauge, $1\frac{3}{4}$ "; No. 2 gauge, 2"; No. 3 gauge, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

These sizes were immediately accepted and put into use by model railroaders, tinplate manufacturers, and such scale manufacturers as were in business at that time, not only in continental Europe, but in England and the U.S. as well. Although certain other gauges, notably Standard gauge ($2\frac{1}{2}$ "), were added from time to time, the authenticity of the sizes and names applied to the numerical series were never questioned.

Number 2 gauge was adopted by Carlisle & Finch of Cincinnati in 1896, and subsequently by Howard, Voltamp, and Knapp. O gauge trains were first made in the U.S. by Ives in 1901, by American Flyer and the American Miniature Railway Company in 1904, and later by many others. Ives was the first to manufacture No. 1 gauge trains in the U.S. (1903) and was followed by Electoy in 1911. Number 1 gauge was still being made commercially in the U.S. as late as 1923.

The above facts should establish the correctness and authenticity of the sizes and terms for the numerical series of gauges, their acceptance in the U.S., and the fact that, by virtue of having been adopted and made by such companies as Ives, Electoy, and Boucher, No. 1 is truly an "American gauge," if such things are to be taken into consideration of the matter, as is O gauge or any other gauge fabricated in the U.S. at one time or another ☺

1944-45: Written by Ed Ravenscroft:

When I became President [with about 750 Members), we only had about \$200.00 in the bank. We decided to gamble it all with a direct mail drive to recruit new members. It worked! We did it again the next year and found ourselves with 8000 members.

Other changes were taking place. The Bulletin was first put on a bi-monthly schedule and a few years later to Monthly. The first work on the NMRA Index of model railroading literature was started. The first pike registry was published. The idea of Data Sheets was born and the yearbook was getting bigger and bigger.

Through all this activity, it became apparent that a strong central office with a paid manager was needed to ensure materials were mailed on time, letters were answered, and the membership service in general was coordinated. After one unfortunate mistake, the efficient office of Bob E. Bast was set-up and is the reason we could function as a national organization.

Bob Bast became Office Manager in October of 1949.